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MEN OF SERVICE

Our children are interested in the deeds of the great men and women of history because of the stirring things accomplished, the dangers encountered, the good triumphant over evil, the struggle against odds, and the reward that crowns perseverance. To teach children to choose rightly, to judge reasonably, and to want to put into practice what they learn, is possible when it is done concretely in regard to matters that touch their lives closely and stir strong motives of interest. If they have the concrete details from which to picture vividly the events, they can understand the situations as though they had actually lived through the experiences themselves.

What history is of most worth? That which comes most closely into relation with the pupils' own conduct. How much does the study of history influence what the pupils do and think? The lives of great men are like the drama on the stage. We are interested in the plot; the difficulties gain our sympathies; the success or failure wins our applause or disapproval. Through seeing evil in action, without ourselves becoming involved in it, we can develop the strength to resist evil. We learn to admire the right and the good. We gain experience in judging character, in choosing whom we will follow. Many children pattern their lives after the heroes or heroines they have in their minds, who have become to them the aim and ideal for which to strive and sacrifice.

History furnishes us with perspective to see things in their true relations and proper proportions. Its study takes us out of the petty trifles of everyday life into the consideration of great, significant issues. One of the purposes of studying biography is to learn how an individual gets on with his fellowmen, how he influences them, how he yields to necessity, how he overcomes obstacles, how he follows ideals, and how his life counts in advancing the common lot of mankind. The human will is the essential characteristic of each individual being. The will is the ego. Hence, in dealing with people, whether children or adults, the chief problem is to strengthen, enlighten, and socialize the human will. History should furnish the stimulus to visions

of ideals that may become the controlling motives of later life. Many a pupil is stirred to the adoption of ideas and purposes by "the Vision of the world and all the wonder that would be." He passes in review great aims, dynamic ideas, and worthy but still unachieved purposes. There is born in him a lasting resolve to devote his life to the accomplishment of some good and worthy aim. Such an influence possesses enduring effect. To choose, for study, character types of pregnant power is a great problem of the curriculum. Certain men realize great developing ideas, and their deeds illustrate such aims. Columbus' idea of sailing west to reach the east was one of the most fruitful that we find in all the range of history. Captain Cook laid the foundation of the great British Empire, in Australasia.

By comparison we see resemblances in the midst of striking contrasts. Nothing is more suggestive of new ideas than comparison of situations, in order both to see wherein there are resemblances and also to note the differences. To train judgment it is necessary to compare events and purposes, noting carefully their resemblances and differences. Children reflect opinions of the teacher, but they nevertheless put much originality into their own opinions, for it is often easier to be original and inconsistent than to apply any abstract principles consistently. I do not know of anything more interesting to young or old than these comparisons that illumine history and make it possible to understand one age or event by its likeness to another. History does repeat itself in never-ending variations.

The explorations and discoveries are part of the effort of the human race to study the great world. The interest and the value of these great adventures for us today lie, not in treating them as isolated facts of history, but in studying them in their relations. Columbus' work cannot be properly understood without learning something of Marco Polo's and Magellan's. While Washington and Lincoln were to me supermen, to whom I did not apply the standards of right and wrong, they had little influence with me. It was the contrast of Napoleon with Washington, the comparison of Roosevelt with Lincoln, that made all four human and intelligible as well as full of interest. Marquette never used to interest me much, so long as his exploration of the Mississippi was the chief fact I knew. Interest grew from the contrast between the expeditions of De Soto, Cortez.

Coronado, and Pizarro, on the one hand, with their hundreds of armed men going forth to conquer and exact tribute, and on the other hand the little band of seven Frenchmen in two bark canoes, with prayer-book and calumet, welcomed and feasted by their savage friends from Green Bay to the Arkansas. The former fought their way and left desolation and hatred in their track. The gentle and devoted Father Marquette was safer than if he had had an army of ten thousand to accompany him through the wilderness of savage Indians. Yet the innocence and self-sacrifice of Fray Padilla ended in his martyrdom. La Salle dreamed of a great French Mississippi Valley that would have made France paramount in North America. While Columbus had innumerable followers who have worked out his ideas in a great variety of ways for centuries, La Salle's aims were abandoned by the French, and the dream never came true.

The character of Captain John Smith shows many analogies and correspondences with that of Roosevelt. Both were pre-eminently men of action, who could get things done, whose careers show startling instances of good luck or happy coincidences because they were always ready to respond when fortune offered. They both roamed the wide world in search of adventure. They were always dominant wherever they were. They turned misfortune very frequently into great good fortune. They are both heroes whose names will always sound stirring to the boys and girls of school age.

What is it in a leader that commands the loyalty of his followers? The children, from their standpoint, have answered this question in part. It is bravery, unselfishness, kindness, and sympathy; it is firmness, sincerity, and perseverance. The leader must be able to get things done; he must be resourceful and self-confident, must have commanding presence and personal magnetism. He must be able to decide promptly and justly, and not waver. Some of the leaders had bosom friends who doubled their effectiveness. Thus La Salle was aided by Tonti. Magellan was able to do much more, because of his team work with Francisco Serrano. Roosevelt and Taft for a time were such congenial spirits that both did more together than they could accomplish when separated. Lenine and Trotsky at present owe much of their success to the fact that they supplement each other in their abilities.

This is the way fifth-grade children express their judgment of the qualities needed in a leader:

A leader must be brave, smart, original, and have command over his men. A.

A leader should be brave and wise. B.

A leader must be kind to his men. He must be able to make his men obey him. He must have experience to fill his position well. P.

A leader should be true to his men, and the men should be true to him. P.

A leader should be kind and helpful to his followers. He should be brave, unselfish, clear-headed, and thoughtful. F.

A leader should be determined and not harsh to his or her followers. M.

A leader must have common sense, bravery, responsibility, wisdom, and kindness. M.

A captain has to have initiative. H.

A man that is a leader, I think, should be brave, kind, unselfish, and honest. L.

I would choose a man or woman who is brave, kind, and willing to risk his life for another, as my leader. F.

A leader should have these qualities: bravery, courage, power to make those under him obey him, to be strict and have determination. A.

Very few emphasize the moral rightness of the leader's aim as important:

The qualities a leader should have are to be brave and honest, to be willing to suffer for his men, always do the right so that his men will follow him. E.

If I were to choose my leader I would choose a man that would not think of himself, but would see to do good for his followers; a man that is honest and brave and would stand for the truth and be educated. E.

Some of the children named other children whom they would choose to follow and gave their reasons:

Of the children in my class I would rather have F. W. for my leader, because he is wise and would not lead me into any place that was not worth going to. I would like an honest leader, and he is honest. J.

I look forward to J. T., because I think he is kind, helpful, brave, unselfish, clear-headed and thoughtful. F.

Out of all the class I think B. would be the best leader because he is strong, brave, smart, and has control over his men. A.

Here are a few answers to the question: Whom do you delight to honor?

I admire Father Marquette because he was not selfish and because he did not go down the Mississippi to see if it ran into the Pacific for his own good, but for France. He did not go down the river only to explore but to teach the Indians of God. E.

De Soto was mean to the Indians, so that they did not like him, while the Indians loved Father Marquette. E.

The reason I like Father Marquette is because he gave up his personal life and went through daring trips to teach the Indians. H.

Ex-President Roosevelt is the man I most admire. Whatever he started to do he always finished. M.

I admire Roosevelt for his courage, bravery, and ability to accomplish what he started out to do. A.

I like Roosevelt because he had much courage and was fearless and brave. L.

Even children of ten judge with decision when their minds are clear on the facts. It is necessary, therefore, to dwell long enough on the type studied in order really to appreciate it concretely. This may take weeks or even months, working with one great character. Generalizations get us nowhere. Most text books, however, contain only conclusions or general statements that represent the adult product of thinking. The children, on the other hand, need the concrete life-experiences to compare and pass judgment upon, in order to think. It takes longer than to memorize the statements that others make about the hero; but that which is to count in building character must reach the emotions and stir the will to action.

Since most of us must be followers, we should recognize the necessary virtues of the common man, who is not a leader at all. The qualities that the followers should have, some children stated thus:

A person who is to be led must be obedient, brave, and steadfast. M.

A leader's men should not be fighting among themselves. B.

A captain has to have initiative. The sailors have to be faithful, and they must want the voyage to be a success. E.

If a leader wants to have success he has to be honest and brave, and his men should be of the same character. L.

The qualities that good followers should have are braveness, faithfulness, and obdientness. A.

Would the practical application of such ideas as these children express purify our sordid politics and make for good citizenship? Of course it is a long way from the expression of an idea to its carrying out. The worst feature of our community life is that we do not live up to the light that we have. On the other hand, if we start the children to thinking genuinely and judging frankly, we may sometime arrive at the actual realization of ideals.